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ABSTRACT

Preservice teachers' beliefs about scholastic physical punishment are explored with regard to four issues: (1) administration of such punishment in schools; (2) providing students with procedural due process prior to the use of such punishment; (3) permitting the administration of such punishment only upon securing parental or guardian permission; and (4) the use or non-use of such punishment with one's own child. The second purpose of the study was to examine 143 preservice teachers' beliefs about 20 myths found in the periodical literature regarding the use of corporal punishment, and to test the reliability and validity of an instrument to measure beliefs about such myths. Analysis of the data revealed that most study participants were against permitting use of corporal punishment in the schools. Students who would allow the administration of scholastic physical punishment apparently also believed it should be allowed only after providing students with procedural due process protections and after securing parental or guardian permission. However, most participants would not administer physical punishment to their own children. Participants believed that physical punishment is both needed and administered only as a last resort, should be used rarely and only for serious problems, is disliked by all students, and should punish only those pupils who misbehave. Participants did not believe that corporal punishment teaches respect, leads to the development of character, deters aggression in students, or prepares pupils to live within a society that punishes those who break the rules. The survey instrument is appended. (Contains 28 references.) (ND)

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ED 409 315

A Study Of Preservice Teachers' Beliefs About Various Issues And Myths Regarding The Use Of Scholastic Corporal Punishment

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Introduction

The use of physical punishment within the schools, i.e., scholastic corporal punishment, is regarded as a most controversial issue concerning the treatment of children (Diamantes, 1992 & 1994; Forness & Sinclair, 1984; Johns & MacNaughton, 1990; McCann, 1978; Rich, 1989; Rust & Kinnard, 1983). A consensus regarding the definition of physical punishment is lacking (Rose, 1989). As applied to the schools, corporal punishment is seen as the presentation of an aversive stimulus contingent upon some behavior (Rose, 1981), as chastisement inflicted on the body in order to modify behavior (Rich, 1989), or as the infliction of physical pain contingent upon the occurrence of misbehavior (Vockell, 1991). Such a disciplinary measure refers to any type of physical reproach that inflicts not only pain but discomfort as well in order to eradicate misbehavior (Castan, 1973; Payne, 1989). This can entail such actions as shaking, paddling, spanking, grabbing, shoving a child "roughly," choking, slapping, excessive exercise, pinching, disrobement, or confinement in an uncomfortable place (Burden & Byrd, 1994; Straus, 1991; Tauber, 1995).

Although varying in detail, the different conceptualizations of physical punishment usually convey the idea of the purposeful and intentional administration of some degree of pain or discomfort as a penalty for offensive or improper behavior committed by a child. By defintion this term does not simply mean punishment as a consequence of rule infraction, but it is the premeditated policy of infliction of pain on a child, most often with a paddle (Hyman, Clarke, & Erdlen, 1987), by a teacher or a school administrator as a regular consequence for breaking a school rule (Johns & MacNaughton, 1990). According to Vockell (1991), the key terms in the definition of corporal punishment are physical pain and contingent. Regarding the latter term, the recipient of physical pain must see a cause-and-effect relationship between the administration of such pain and the event that lead up to it. In most schools, physical punishment is utilized according to guidelines that require specification of the contingency.

Parental discipline styles may be distinguished in terms of three distinct types (Hoffman & Saltzstein, 1967). The <u>explicit induction type</u> entails the parents' employment of reasoning,

discussion, and/or roleplaying and involves focusing attention upon the consequences of a child's misbehavior without the use of punishment. The love withdrawal type signifies the utilization of the withdrawal of parents' affection as a punishment for a child's undesirable behavior. Finally, the power assertion type involves the use of physical or material sanctions to control a child's misbehavior. Both the withdrawal of privileges and the administration of corporal punishment are disciplinary procedures normally associated with this latter type.

The U.S. Supreme Court in Ingraham v. Wright (1977) addressed and ruled upon several key issues associated with the use of scholastic physical punishment. In holding that such a method of discipline did not violate the cruel and unusual punishment prohibition of the Eighth Amendment, the High Court also established that the states may legally authorize the administration of reasonable corporal punishment without a prior hearing or notice and without the consent of a student's parents (Johnson, Dupuis, Musial, Hall, & Gollnick, 1996; Sadker & Sadker, 1997; Spring, 1994; Valente, 1980). Another issue that is of personal interest to this author is whether preservice teachers tend to be in favor of physical punishment with their own child and whether such a belief is consistent with their belief in the appropriateness of this type of disciplinary measure with other people's children, i.e., students.

Dubanoski, Inaba, and Gerkewicz (1983) state that the continuous general support for the administration of corporal punishment within the schools is based upon several factors: (1) a lack of knowledge regarding disciplinary alternatives to physical punishment; (2) an unawareness about the problems associated with such punishment; and (3) certain beliefs regarding the effectiveness of corporal punishment. Regarding the latter, if scholastic physical punishment is to be abolished then those who establish school policy must be shown that many of those commonsense beliefs that are often used in support of this form of punishment are in actuality myths with frequently no basis in fact.

Henson (1986) contends that today's educators are responsible for recognizing that there exists various popular myths regarding the powers of corporal punishment. An awareness of such myths could help deter the overuse and the misuse of this manner of disciplinary

action.

Bauer, Dubanoski, Yamauchi, and Honbo (1990) point out that due to the absence of hard data, rationales are often given to support the utilization of scholastic physical punishment. However, such rationales usually turn out to be more mythical than factual in nature. Moreover, one of the initial steps in altering social policy is to acknowledge and address the weaknesses in the present state of knowledge about the effects of corporal punishment within the school setting.

Finally, Straus (1994) argues that while there are many reasons for the strong overall support of physical punishment throughout this nation, most of these reasons are in reality myths. Essentially there are two types of such myths. The first type concentrates upon the effectiveness of this form of punishment. The major reason for the continual persistence of this type of myth is selective inattention, whereby people do not pay attention to or remember the times when the use of corporal punishment fails to work because doing so contradicts what they believe to be true. The second type deals with the harmlessness of physical punishment. The two major reasons for the existence of this type are that the harmful effects of such a disciplinary procedure do not become obvious right away, often not for years, and that only a relatively small percentage of children who are administered corporal punishment experience obviously harmful effects.

Purposes Of The Study

The first principal purpose of this study was to investigate preservice teachers' beliefs about the following four (4) issues associated with the utilization of scholastic physical punishment: (1) allowing the administration of such punishment within the schools; (2) providing students with procedural due process prior to the use of such punishment; (3) permitting the administration of such punishment only upon securing parental or guardian permission; and (4) being in favor or not of the utilization of such punishment with one's own child. The second major purpose of this investigation was to examine prospective teachers' beliefs about twenty (20) various myths found in the periodical literature regarding the use of corporal punishment. Finally, the third central purpose of this research

project was to field test, principally in terms of test reliability and test validity, an instrument devised by this writer and aimed at measuring beliefs about such myths.

Significance Of The Study

Following a comprehensive review of primarily the periodical literature from 1944 through 1996 (Gaffney, 1997), this author found only one previous study, i.e., Diamantes (1994), that examined preservice teachers' attitudes toward the topic of scholastic physical punishment. This piece of research only examined whether the sample involved felt that the administration of such punishment was both useful and justifiable but did not address the other three issues that were the focus of this present investigation. In addition, this same literature review revealed no prior research regarding prospective teachers' beliefs about different myths associated with the use of corporal punishment. Thus, it is felt by this writer that this present study will make a unique and worthwhile contribution to the growing body of professional writings concerning this recurrent, important, and controversial issue regarding the treatment of children.

Sample

The overall sample (N = 143 With A 96% Total Response Rate) involved in this study consisted of three separate subsamples. The first subsample (N = 49 With A 94% Response Rate) was comprised of preservice teachers taking an undergraduate introduction to education course at a public postsecondary institution in south Florida during the 1996 fall and 1997 spring semesters. The second subsample (N = 52 With A 96% Response Rate) was made up of prospective teachers taking an undergraduate general teaching methods course at a private postsecondary institution in south Florida during the 1996 fall and 1997 spring semesters. The third subsample (N = 42 With A 98% Response Rate) consisted of preservice teachers taking an undergraduate introduction to education course at another public postsecondary institution in south Florida during the 1997 spring semester. It is important to note that although the state of Florida at the time of this investigation allowed the administration of scholastic physical punishment, the total sample currently attended school in areas of that state which did not

permit the use of this form of punishment in either the public or the parochial school systems.

In terms of demographic characteristics of the overall sample, 70% of the subjects were majoring in elementary education, 26% in secondary education, 2% in special education, and 2% in early childhood education. Concerning college class rank, 18% of the subjects were freshmen, 34% were sophomores, 25% were juniors, 17% were seniors, and 6% were college graduates working on initial teacher certification and with no previous professional teaching experience. Furthermore, 81% of the subjects were planning to someday teach at a public school with 71% wishing to teach at the elementary school level and 27% at the secondary school level. Regarding highest educational level attained, 62% of the subjects had previously earned a high school diploma, 32% an associate degree, and 6% a bachelor's degree. In terms of ethnic/racial background, 43% of the subjects were Latin/Hispanic, 29% were Caucasian, 26% were African-American, and 2% were Asian. Finally, 82% of the subjects were female with an average age of 26 years.

Instrumentation

The instrument that was used to collect data for this research project is entitled the Corporal Punishment Questionnaire (hereafter called the CPQ Form). This self-report and paper-and-pencil scale (See Appendix A) was devised by this author in order to assess the subjects' beliefs about different issues and myths regarding the utilization of scholastic physical punishment. The subjects responded to the twenty-four (24) declarative statements using a Likert-type scale with the choice-options of Strongly Agree (5 points), Agree (4 points), Undecided (3 points), Disagree (2 points), and Strongly Disagree (1 point). The CPQ Form is regarded by this writer as a relatively simple, nonthreatening, and easy-to-administer measure with an approximate administration time of 10 to 15 minutes in length. It consists of an Issues Section and a Myths Section.

Concerning the Issues Section, the following four (4) items (statements A through D) were written to assess the subjects' beliefs about various issues regarding the use of scholastic corporal punishment:

*A. The administration of corporal punishment should be allowed in the schools.
*B. Students should be provided with procedural due process, i.e., notice and/or a hearing, before they are subjected to corporal punishment.
*C. Students should be administered corporal punishment only with parental or guardian permission.
*D. I would be in favor of the use of corporal punishment with my own child.

The first three issues were derived from the Ingraham v. Wright (1977) decision, while the last issue originated with this author and was examined out of personal interest.

Regarding the Myths Section, the ensuing twenty (20) items (statements 1 through 20) were developed to assess the subjects' beliefs about different myths regarding the administration of scholastic physical punishment:

*1. Corporal punishment is time efficient.
*2. The effect of corporal punishment increases with its use.
*3. Corporal punishment attacks the problem head on.
*4. All students dislike corporal punishment.
*5. Educators only use corporal punishment for the benefit of their students.
*6. Corporal punishment is a way of punishing only those students who misbehave.
*7. Corporal punishment prepares students to live in a society that punishes those who break the rules.
*8. Corporal punishment deters aggression in students.
*9. Corporal punishment leads to the development of character.
*10. Corporal punishment teaches respect.
*11. Corporal punishment is the only thing some students understand.
*12. Without corporal punishment behavioral problems increase.
*13. Corporal punishment is used only as a last resort.
*14. Corporal punishment is necessary for the protection of educators.
*15. Corporal punishment works better than other disciplinary methods.

*16. Corporal punishment is harmless.
*17. Corporal punishment is rarely used.
*18. If educators don't use corporal punishment, then they will verbally abuse a student.
*19. Corporal punishment is needed as a last resort.
*20. Corporal punishment is used only for serious problems.

Statements 1-8 were taken from an article by Henson (1986), statements 9-14 from a publication by Bauer, Dubanoski, Yamauchi, and Honbo (1990), and statements 15-20 from the writing of Straus (1994). For further information about the arguments used in determining the existence and nature of these various myths, the reader is encouraged to refer directly to these three sources. In some instances not all of the myths presented by these authors were employed in this study, and some of the myths that were utilized, especially those that are described by Straus (1994), were modified in order to make them more appropriate for the nature of the subjects at hand. The theoretical scoring range on the Myths Section of the CPQ Form is from 20 to 100 with a theoretical mean of 60. The higher the overall score is then the more a particular subject believes in the different myths associated with the use of scholastic corporal punishment.

A test reliability of .928 was calculated on the Myths Section of this instrument with the present overall sample using the Cronbach's alpha technique. This reliability coefficient was considered by this writer to be more than adequate for the investigative purposes at hand. Furthermore, test validity was determined for this section by the fact that statements 1-20 were regarded and treated as myths by some of those authorities, i.e., a panel of judges, who write and publish in the area of physical punishment.

Moreover, test validity for the Myths Section was also established by computing Pearson Product-Moment Correlations between statement A and each of the statements numbered 1-20 and this section taken as a whole. It was felt that if statistically significant positive relationships existed, then each of those statements and the Myths Section itself are in fact measuring items not only associated with but supportive of the use of corporal punishment, i.e., a myth. Except for statement 4, statistically significant positive relationships were found between statement A

and each of the remaining 19 statements and this section in general. It is suggested by this author that in subsequent research if statement 4 continues such a tendency that it either be revised or deleted from the Myths Section of the CPQ Form.

Data Collection Procedures

This writer administered the CPQ Form directly to the subjects as a group during one of their class sessions at the beginning or the middle part of the semester. At the time of the administration of this instrument it was conveyed to the subjects that scholastic corporal punishment was being defined for the purpose of this study as the premeditated, purposeful, and intentional use of physical pain or discomfort by an educator as a penalty for a student's improper behavior and as a means to try to modify or to eradicate such misbehavior. This was done so that the subjects would respond to the CPQ Form from more of a basis of a commonality of meaning. This scale was accompanied at the time of its administration by a demographic checklist and no more than two other instruments measuring various constructs that will be reported on in future research projects. All of the subjects chose to participate in this investigation on an anonymous and a voluntary basis with no incentives provided. It was conveyed to the subjects that their participation in this study would have no bearing upon their final evaluation within the courses involved.

Findings

Regarding *Statement (Issue) A*, **"The administration of corporal punishment should be allowed in the schools."**, 8% of the subjects responded Strongly Agree, 19% Agree, 19% Undecided, 15% Disagree, and 39% Strongly Disagree. Therefore, the majority (54%) of the subjects were in some degree of disagreement with allowing the use of scholastic physical punishment. This item had a median score of 2.00, a mean score of 2.413, and a standard deviation of 1.366. Scores for this statement were also positively skewed (Sk = 0.413).

In terms of *Statement (Issue) B*, **"Students should be provided with procedural due process, i.e., notice and/or a hearing, before they are subjected to corporal punishment."**,

33% of the subjects responded Strongly Agree, 38% Agree, 15% Undecided, 6% Disagree, and 8% Strongly Disagree. Thus, the majority (71%) of the subjects were in some degree of agreement with allowing procedural due process protections prior to the administration of scholastic physical punishment. This item had a median score of 4.00, a mean score of 3.818, and a standard deviation of 1.192. Scores for this statement were also negatively skewed (Sk = -0.182).

Concerning *Statement (Issue) C*, **"Students should be administered corporal punishment only with parental or guardian permission."**, 34% of the subjects responded Strongly Agree, 34% Agree, 8% Undecided, 11% Disagree, and 13% Strongly Disagree. Therefore, the majority (68%) of the subjects were in some degree of agreement with only allowing the utilization of scholastic physical punishment upon receiving parental or guardian permission. This item had a median score of 4.00, a mean score of 3.643, and a standard deviation of 1.381. Scores for this statement were also negatively skewed (Sk = -0.357).

In terms of *Statement (Issue) D*, **"I would be in favor of the use of corporal punishment with my own child."**, 6% of the subjects responded Strongly Agree, 22% Agree, 11% Undecided, 16% Disagree, and 45% Strongly Disagree. Thus, the majority (61%) of the subjects were in some degree of disagreement with the administration of scholastic physical punishment with their own children. This item had a median score of 2.00, a mean score of 2.287, and a standard deviation of 1.382. Scores for this statement were also positively skewed (Sk = 0.287).

A positive but a statistically nonsignificant relationship was found at the .05 level between the subjects' responses to statement A and statement B (Pearson r = 0.162, df = 141, for a two-tailed test of significance). Therefore, agreement with allowing the administration of scholastic corporal punishment was positively but not significantly associated with also believing that students should be furnished with procedural due process protections prior to the use of this form of disciplinary action.

A positive and a statistically significant relationship was discovered beyond the .05 level between the subjects' responses to

statement A and statement C (Pearson r = 0.23, df = 141, p <.05 for a two-tailed test of significance). Thus, agreement with allowing the administration of scholastic physical punishment was positively and significantly associated with also believing that such a disciplinary procedure should be utilized only with parental or guardian permission.

A positive and a statistically significant relationship was found beyond the .01 level between the subjects' responses to statement B and statement C (Pearson r = 0.407, df = 141, p <.01 for a two-tailed test of significance). Therefore, believing that students should be provided with procedural due process protections prior to the administration of scholastic corporal punishment was positively and significantly associated with also believing that this type of disciplinary method should be used only with parental or guardian permission.

A positive and a statistically significant relationship was discovered beyond the .01 level between the subjects' responses to statement A and statement D (Pearson r = 0.771, df = 141, p <.01 for a two-tailed test of significance). Thus, agreement with allowing the administration of scholastic physical punishment was positively and significantly associated with also being in favor of the utilization of this form of disciplinary action with one's own child.

Regarding *Statement (Myth) 1*, **"Corporal punishment is time efficient."**, 1% of the subjects responded Strongly Agree, 19% Agree, 32% Undecided, 24% Disagree, and 24% Strongly Disagree. Therefore, more subjects (48%) were in some degree of disagreement with this particular myth. This item had a median score of 3.00, a mean score of 2.49, and a standard deviation of 1.096. Scores for this statement were also negatively skewed (Sk = -0.51). A statistically significant positive relationship did exist beyond the .01 level between belief in this myth and agreement with allowing the administration of scholastic physical punishment (Pearson r = 0.571, df = 141, p <.01 for a two-tailed test of significance).

In terms of *Statement (Myth) 2*, **"The effect of corporal punishment increases with its use."**, 6% of the subjects responded Strongly Agree, 20% Agree, 28% Undecided, 23% Disagree, and 23% Strongly Disagree. Thus, more subjects (46%) were in some

degree of disagreement with this particular myth. This item had a median score of 3.00, a mean score of 2.657, and a standard deviation of 1.207. Scores for this statement were also negatively skewed (Sk = -0.34). A statistically significant positive relationship did exist beyond the .01 level between belief in this myth and agreement with allowing the administration of scholastic physical punishment (Pearson r = 0.353, df = 141, p <.01 for a two-tailed test of significance).

Concerning *Statement (Myth) 3*, **"Corporal punishment attacks the problem head on."**, 5% of the subjects responded Strongly Agree, 17% Agree, 17% Undecided, 27% Disagree, and 34% Strongly Disagree. Therefore, the majority (61%) of the subjects were in some degree of disagreement with this particular myth. This item had a median score of 2.00, a mean score of 2.322, and a standard deviation of 1.232. Scores for this statement were also positively skewed (Sk = 0.322). A statistically significant positive relationship did exist beyond the .01 level between belief in this myth and agreement with allowing the administration of scholastic physical punishment (Pearson r = 0.636, df = 141, p <.01 for a two-tailed test of significance).

Regarding *Statement (Myth) 4*, **"All students dislike corporal punishment."**, 23% of the subjects responded Strongly Agree, 29% Agree, 27% Undecided, 16% Disagree, and 5% Strongly Disagree. Thus, the majority (52%) of the subjects were in some degree of agreement with this particular myth. This item had a median score of 4.00, a mean score of 3.497, and a standard deviation of 1.152. Scores for this statement were also negatively skewed (Sk = -0.503). A negative but a statistically nonsignificant relationship did exist at the .05 level between belief in this myth and agreement with allowing the administration of scholastic physical punishment (Pearson r = -0.135, df = 141, for a two-tailed test of significance).

In terms of *Statement (Myth) 5*, **"Educators only use corporal punishment for the benefit of their students."**, 3% of the subjects responded Strongly Agree, 23% Agree, 21% Undecided, 33% Disagree, and 20% Strongly Disagree. Therefore, the majority (53%) of the subjects were in some degree of disagreement with this particular myth. This item had a median score of 2.00, a

mean score of 2.552, and a standard deviation of 1.132. Scores for this statement were also positively skewed (Sk = 0.552). A statistically significant positive relationship did exist beyond the .01 level between belief in this myth and agreement with allowing the administration of scholastic physical punishment (Pearson r = 0.603, df = 141, p <.01 for a two-tailed test of significance).

Concerning *Statement (Myth) 6*, **"Corporal punishment is a way of punishing only those students who misbehave."**, 12% of the subjects responded Strongly Agree, 43% Agree, 13% Undecided, 17% Disagree, and 15% Strongly Disagree. Thus, the majority (55%) of the subjects were in some degree of agreement with this particular myth. This item had a median score of 4.00, a mean score of 3.182, and a standard deviation of 1.288. Scores for this statement were also negatively skewed (Sk = -0.818). A statistically significant positive relationship did exist beyond the .01 level between belief in this myth and agreement with allowing the administration of scholastic physical punishment (Pearson r = 0.522, df = 141, p <.01 for a two-tailed test of significance).

Regarding *Statement (Myth) 7*, **"Corporal punishment prepares students to live in a society that punishes those who break the rules."**, 9% of the subjects responded Strongly Agree, 29% Agree, 16% Undecided, 25% Disagree, and 21% Strongly Disagree. Therefore, more subjects (46%) were in some degree of disagreement with this particular myth. This item had a median score of 3.00, a mean score of 2.811, and a standard deviation of 1.306. Scores for this statement were also negatively skewed (Sk = -0.189). A statistically significant positive relationship did exist beyond the .01 level between belief in this myth and agreement with allowing the administration of scholastic physical punishment (Pearson r = 0.636, df = 141, p <.01 for a two-tailed test of significance).

In terms of *Statement (Myth) 8*, **"Corporal punishment deters aggression in students."**, 5% of the subjects responded Strongly Agree, 19% Agree, 25% Undecided, 24% Disagree, and 27% Strongly Disagree. Thus, the majority (51%) of the subjects were in some degree of disagreement with this particular myth. This item had a median score of 2.00, a mean score of 2.51, and a standard deviation of 1.205. Scores for this statement were also positively

skewed (Sk = 0.51). A statistically significant positive relationship did exist beyond the .01 level between belief in this myth and agreement with allowing the administration of scholastic physical punishment (Pearson r = 0.42, df = 141, p <.01 for a two-tailed test of significance).

Concerning *Statement (Myth) 9*, **"Corporal punishment leads to the development of character."**, 4% of the subjects responded Strongly Agree, 23% Agree, 20% Undecided, 25% Disagree, and 28% Strongly Disagree. Therefore, the majority (53%) of the subjects were in some degree of disagreement with this particular myth. This item had a median score of 2.00, a mean score of 2.497, and a standard deviation of 1.228. Scores for this statement were also positively skewed (Sk = 0.497). A statistically significant positive relationship did exist beyond the .01 level between belief in this myth and agreement with allowing the administration of scholastic physical punishment (Pearson r = 0.495, df = 141, p <.01 for a two-tailed test of significance).

Regarding *Statement (Myth) 10*, **"Corporal punishment teaches respect."**, 2% of the subjects responded Strongly Agree, 27% Agree, 10% Undecided, 27% Disagree, and 34% Strongly Disagree. Thus, the majority (61%) of the subjects were in some degree of disagreement with this particular myth. This item had a median score of 2.00, a mean score of 2.357, and a standard deviation of 1.254. Scores for this statement were also positively skewed (Sk = 0.357). A statistically significant positive relationship did exist beyond the .01 level between belief in this myth and agreement with allowing the administration of scholastic physical punishment (Pearson r = 0.715, df = 141, p <.01 for a two-tailed test of significance).

In terms of *Statement (Myth) 11*, **"Corporal punishment is the only thing some students understand."**, 5% of the subjects responded Strongly Agree, 38% Agree, 8% Undecided, 20% Disagree, and 29% Strongly Disagree. Therefore, more subjects (49%) were in some degree of disagreement with this particular myth. This item had a median score of 3.00, a mean score of 2.685, and a standard deviation of 1.351. Scores for this statement were also negatively skewed (Sk = -0.315). A statistically significant positive relationship did exist beyond the .01 level between belief in this myth and

agreement with allowing the administration of scholastic physical punishment (Pearson r = 0.495, df = 141, p <.01 for a two-tailed test of significance).

Concerning *Statement (Myth) 12*, **"Without corporal punishment behavioral problems increase."**, 6% of the subjects responded Strongly Agree, 16% Agree, 17% Undecided, 30% Disagree, and 31% Strongly Disagree. Thus, the majority (61%) of the subjects were in some degree of disagreement with this particular myth. This item had a median score of 2.00, a mean score of 2.343, and a standard deviation of 1.23. Scores for this statement were also positively skewed (Sk = 0.343). A statistically significant positive relationship did exist beyond the .01 level between belief in this myth and agreement with allowing the administration of scholastic physical punishment (Pearson r = 0.62, df = 141, p <.01 for a two-tailed test of significance).

Regarding *Statement (Myth) 13*, **"Corporal punishment is used only as a last resort."**, 25% of the subjects responded Strongly Agree, 29% Agree, 16% Undecided, 15% Disagree, and 15% Strongly Disagree. Therefore, the majority (54%) of the subjects were in some degree of agreement with this particular myth. This item had a median score of 4.00, a mean score of 3.315, and a standard deviation of 1.391. Scores for this statement were also negatively skewed (Sk = -0.685). A statistically significant positive relationship did exist beyond the .01 level between belief in this myth and agreement with allowing the administration of scholastic physical punishment (Pearson r = 0.462, df = 141, p <.01 for a two-tailed test of significance).

In terms of *Statement (Myth) 14*, **"Corporal punishment is necessary for the protection of educators."**, 2% of the subjects responded Strongly Agree, 10% Agree, 17% Undecided, 39% Disagree, and 32% Strongly Disagree. Thus, the majority (71%) of the subjects were in some degree of disagreement with this particular myth. This item had a median score of 2.00, a mean score of 2.133, and a standard deviation of 1.039. Scores for this statement were also positively skewed (Sk = 0.133). A statistically significant positive relationship did exist beyond the .01 level between belief in this myth and agreement with allowing the administration of scholastic physical punishment (Pearson r = 0.587, df = 141, p <.01 for a two-

tailed test of significance).

Concerning *Statement (Myth) 15*, **"Corporal punishment works better than other disciplinary methods."**, 3% of the subjects responded Strongly Agree, 8% Agree, 24% Undecided, 33% Disagree, and 32% Strongly Disagree. Therefore, the majority (65%) of the subjects were in some degree of disagreement with this particular myth. This item had a median score of 2.00, a mean score of 2.196, and a standard deviation of 1.079. Scores for this statement were also positively skewed (Sk = 0.196). A statistically significant positive relationship did exist beyond the .01 level between belief in this myth and agreement with allowing the administration of scholastic physical punishment (Pearson r = 0.619, df = 141, p <.01 for a two-tailed test of significance).

Regarding *Statement (Myth) 16*, **"Corporal punishment is harmless."**, 1% of the subjects responded Strongly Agree, 8% Agree, 16% Undecided, 30% Disagree, and 45% Strongly Disagree. Thus, the majority (75%) of the subjects were in some degree of disagreement with this particular myth. This item had a median score of 2.00, a mean score of 1.909, and a standard deviation of 1.017. Scores for this statement were also negatively skewed (Sk = -0.091). A statistically significant positive relationship did exist beyond the .01 level between belief in this myth and agreement with allowing the administration of scholastic physical punishment (Pearson r = 0.601, df = 141, p <.01 for a two-tailed test of significance).

In terms of *Statement (Myth) 17*, **"Corporal punishment is rarely used."**, 7% of the subjects responded Strongly Agree, 35% Agree, 42% Undecided, 10% Disagree, and 6% Strongly Disagree. Therefore, more subjects (42%) were in some degree of agreement with or undecided about this particular myth. This item had a median score of 3.00, a mean score of 3.273, and a standard deviation of 0.94. Scores for this statement were also positively skewed (Sk = 0.273). A statistically significant positive relationship did exist beyond the .01 level between belief in this myth and agreement with allowing the administration of scholastic physical punishment (Pearson r = 0.348, df = 141, p <.01 for a two-tailed test of significance).

Concerning *Statement (Myth) 18*, **"If educators don't use**

corporal punishment, then they will verbally abuse a student.", 1% of the subjects responded Strongly Agree, 9% Agree, 19% Undecided, 42% Disagree, and 29% Strongly Disagree. Thus, the majority (71%) of the subjects were in some degree of disagreement with this particular myth. This item had a median score of 2.00, a mean score of 2.126, and a standard deviation of 0.974. Scores for this statement were also positively skewed (Sk = 0.126). A statistically significant positive relationship did exist beyond the .01 level between belief in this myth and agreement with allowing the administration of scholastic physical punishment (Pearson r = 0.397, df = 141, p <.01 for a two-tailed test of significance).

Regarding *Statement (Myth) 19*, "**Corporal punishment is needed as a last resort.**", 13% of the subjects responded Strongly Agree, 32% Agree, 14% Undecided, 19% Disagree, and 22% Strongly Disagree. Therefore, more subjects (45%) were in some degree of agreement with this particular myth. This item had a median score of 3.00, a mean score of 2.944, and a standard deviation of 1.388. Scores for this statement were also negatively skewed (Sk = -0.056). A statistically significant positive relationship did exist beyond the .01 level between belief in this myth and agreement with allowing the administration of scholastic physical punishment (Pearson r = 0.614, df = 141, p <.01 for a two-tailed test of significance).

In terms of *Statement (Myth) 20*, "**Corporal punishment is used only for serious problems.**", 12% of the subjects responded Strongly Agree, 32% Agree, 22% Undecided, 14% Disagree, and 20% Strongly Disagree. Thus, more subjects (44%) were in some degree of agreement with this particular myth. This item had a median score of 3.00, a mean score of 3.007, and a standard deviation of 1.32. Scores for this statement were also positively skewed (Sk = 0. 007). A statistically significant positive relationship did exist beyond the .01 level between belief in this myth and agreement with allowing the administration of scholastic physical punishment (Pearson r = 0.60, df = 141, p <.01 for a two-tailed test of significance).

Concerning all of the items contained within the Myths Section of the CPQ Form, on the average 7% of the subjects responded Stongly Agree, 23% Agree, 20% Undecided, 25% Disagree, and 25% Strongly Disagree. Therefore, the subjects typically responded more in a disagreeing manner toward the different myths contained within this

section. In addition, on 6 out of 20 (30%) of the statements i.e., in descending order myths 6, 13, 4, 19, 20, and 17, the subjects showed a higher percentage of overall agreement than disagreement. The average percentage of subjects agreeing with these items was 48.67. On the other hand, on 14 out of 20 (70%) of the statements, i.e., in descending order myths 16, 14 & 18, 15, 3 & 10 & 12, 5 & 9, 8, 11, 1, and 2 & 7, the subjects demonstrated a higher percentage of overall disagreement than agreement. The average percentage of subjects disagreeing with these items was 57.93. Finally, on 5 of the statements, i.e., in descending order myths 17, 1, 2, 4, and 8, the subjects exhibited the higher percentages of overall indecisiveness, i.e., 25% or more of the subjects choosing the Undecided choice-option.

Furthermore, the subjects had a maximum individual score of 89 and a minimum individual score of 23 for a range of 66 on the entire Myths Section of the CPQ Form. They also demonstrated a median score of 54.00, a mean score of 52.88, and a standard deviation of 15.524 on this section. Both measures of central tendency, i.e., median and mean, were below the theoretical mean of 60. In addition, total scores on the entire Myths Section were found to be negatively skewed (Sk = -1.112). A statistically significant positive relationship did exist beyond the .01 level between belief in the myths taken as a whole and agreement with allowing the administration of scholastic physical punishment (Pearson $r = 0.773$, $df = 141$, $p < .01$ for a two-tailed test of significance).

Conclusions And Discussion

Most of the subjects in this investigation were in disagreement with permitting the use of scholastic corporal punishment. This finding differs from the results of some previous research conducted by Diamantes (1994) and Gaffney (1991). In the former study, the majority of a group of student teachers demonstrated a favorable view toward the utilization of scholastic physical punishment when they indicated that the administration of this method of discipline is both useful and justifiable in the schools. In the latter investigation, most juniors and seniors in elementary and secondary education were against the prohibition of scholastic corporal punishment.

Perhaps the fact that the subjects in this current study

presently attended school (and were predominantly raised) in an area of Florida where scholastic physical punishment is not allowed in either the public or the parochial school systems is a major contributing factor to such a finding. Moreover, perhaps these subjects have been socialized through their personal K-12 school experiences in this part of the state and/or by their teacher education programs to perceive other forms of disciplinary procedures as more acceptable and appropriate.

It is also interesting to note that a sizeable number (46%) of the subjects either agreed with or were undecided about allowing the administration of scholastic corporal punishment. This may be primarily due to such factors as they have become accustomed to this form of discipline at home while growing up, have not become acquainted yet with alternative means of discipline in their teacher preparation courses, or have really given this isssue no previous thought. Perhaps exposure to alternative methods of maintaining appropriate and desirable student behavior, i.e., measures for preventing the need for physical discipline in the first place, along with the possible consequences for pupils and educators of using such methods of handling misbehavior would prove to be beneficial for these particular subjects.

There was found a positive but a statistically nonsignificant association between agreement with permitting the utilization of scholastic physical punishment and believing that students should be furnished with procedural due process protections before the administration of this form of disciplinary action. Thus, it appears among those subjects who are in favor of scholastic corporal punishment that there tends to exist a corresponding belief, though not necessarily a strong one, that such forms of punishment should be accompanied by some sort of safeguards for pupils against capricious or unwarranted use.

A positive and a statistically significant association was in evidence between agreement with allowing the administration of scholastic physical punishment and believing that such punishment should be utilized only with parental or guardian permission. Therefore, it seems that among those subjects who are in favor of the use of scholastic corporal punishment there is also a tendency to believe that parents or guardians should have some say in the

manner in which their children are disciplined at school.

The majority of the subjects in this research project tended to be in favor of both administering scholastic physical punishment after providing a student with procedural due process protections and after securing parental or guardian permission. In fact, there was discovered a positive and a statistically significant association between believing that pupils should be furnished with procedural due process protections prior to the use of scholastic corporal punishment and believing that this type of disciplinary procedure should be utilized only with the permission of parents or guardians. Perhaps these subjects generally believe that such precautions are in order due to their possible perceptions of the serious, potentially harmful, and irreversible nature of this manner of punishment.

Most of the subjects in this investigation had a tendency not to be in agreement with the administration of scholastic physical punishment with their own child. Furthermore, a positive and a statistically significant association was found between agreement with permitting the use of scholastic corporal punishment and being favorable toward the utilization of this manner of discipline with one's own son or daughter. Thus, there was seen an overall consistency in these subjects' views regarding the use of such disciplinary measures, regardless of whose child is involved. Perhaps one's educator discipline style is a matter of being a natural outgrowth of one's actual or potential style of parental discipline.

Concerning overall agreement with some of the myths examined in this study, the subjects tended to believe that scholastic physical punishment is both needed and administered only as a last resort, is used rarely and only for serious problems, is disliked by all students, and punishes only those pupils who misbehave. It is suggested by this writer that the teacher education programs that these subjects are currently enrolled in or will eventually enroll in should place particular emphasis on exploring with these prospective teachers the mythical nature of such points of view.

Regarding overall disagreement with the remaining myths looked at in this research project, the subjects had a tendency not to believe that scholastic corporal punishment teaches respect, leads to the development of character, deters agression in students, and

prepares pupils to live within a society that punishes those who break the rules. Moreover, it was also generally disbelieved that such means of punishment is the only thing some students understand, is time efficient and harmless, attacks the problem head on, and its effect increases with its use. Furthermore, the subjects also tended not to believe that educators only use scholastic physical punishment for their pupils' benefit and that if they don't use this form of discipline then they will verbally abuse their students. Finally, it was not commonly believed that this method of discipline works better than other disciplinary procedures, that without its use behavioral problems increase, and that it is necessary for the protection of educators.

On several myths the subjects had a tendency to exhibit a higher degree of overall uncertainty concerning the beliefs that scholastic corporal punishment is time efficient, that its effect increases with its use, and that it is rarely used. Also, there was a higher degree of general indecisiveness regarding the viewpoints that all pupils dislike scholastic physical punishment and that this type of disciplinary action deters aggression in students. It is suggested by this author that the teacher preparation programs that these subjects are presently enrolled in or will someday enroll in should put special emphases on reinforcing with these preservice teachers the mythical nature of these beliefs and on clearing up any uncertainties that they may have about such myths.

In terms of future research regarding this topic, the following suggestions are made:

*Replicate this study with preservice teachers in other areas of Florida and/or the United States where the use of scholastic corporal punishment is permitted and compare those results with the findings of this investigation.

*Conduct this study with inservice teachers, professional support staff, e.g., school counselors, and/or school administrators in and/or outside this area of Florida and compare the results from these various groups of educators with each other and with the findings of this research project.

*Carry out a study using different groups of educators in order

to determine what type of relationships possibly exist between beliefs in these various issues and/or myths associated with the utilization of scholastic physical punishment and such constructs as dogmatism, pupil control ideology, and teacher efficacy.

*Conduct studies with various groups of educators for the purpose of continuing to collect information about the test validity and especially the test reliability of the Myths Section of the CPQ Form.

*Submit the Myths Section to factor analytic procedures with different groups of educators in order to verify whether this section of the CPQ Form does in fact represent a unidimensional scale with one total score, thus further attesting to this section's test validity.

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Appendix A

THE CPQ FORM

Directions: On the following pages a number of statements about the use of corporal punishment within the schools are presented. There are no correct nor incorrect answers to these statements, and you can be sure that there are others who would hold viewpoints similar to yours. After reading each statement please place a check mark (✓) next to one of the five responses which best describes your personal and frank point of view or opinion. Please respond to every statement. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Code: SA = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
U = Undecided
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree

A. The administration of corporal punishment should be allowed in the schools.
SA _____ A _____ U _____ D _____ SD _____

B. Students should be provided with procedural due process, i.e., notice and/or a hearing, before they are subjected to corporal punishment.
SA _____ A _____ U _____ D _____ SD _____

C. Students should be administered corporal punishment only with parental or guardian permission.
SA _____ A _____ U _____ D _____ SD _____

D. I would be in favor of the use of corporal punishment with my own child.
SA _____ A _____ U _____ D _____ SD _____

1. Corporal punishment is time efficient.
SA _____ A _____ U _____ D _____ SD _____

2. The effect of corporal punishment increases with its use.
SA _____ A _____ U _____ D _____ SD _____

Code: SA = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
U = Undecided
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree

3. Corporal punishment attacks the problem head on.
SA _____ A _____ U _____ D _____ SD _____

4. All students dislike corporal punishment.
SA _____ A _____ U _____ D _____ SD _____

5. Educators only use corporal punishment for the benefit of their students.
SA _____ A _____ U _____ D _____ SD _____

6. Corporal punishment is a way of punishing only those students who misbehave.
SA _____ A _____ U _____ D _____ SD _____

7. Corporal punishment prepares students to live in a society that punishes those who break the rules.
SA _____ A _____ U _____ D _____ SD _____

8. Corporal punishment deters aggression in students.
SA _____ A _____ U _____ D _____ SD _____

9. Corporal punishment leads to the development of character.
SA _____ A _____ U _____ D _____ SD _____

10. Corporal punishment teaches respect.
SA _____ A _____ U _____ D _____ SD _____

11. Corporal punishment is the only thing some students understand.
SA _____ A _____ U _____ D _____ SD _____

12. Without corporal punishment behavioral problems increase.
SA _____ A _____ U _____ D _____ SD _____

13. Corporal punishment is used only as a last resort.
SA _____ A _____ U _____ D _____ SD _____

Code: SA = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
U = Undecided
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree

14. Corporal punishment is necessary for the protection of educators.
SA _____ A _____ U _____ D _____ SD _____

15. Corporal punishment works better than other disciplinary methods.
SA _____ A _____ U _____ D _____ SD _____

16. Corporal punishment is harmless.
SA _____ A _____ U _____ D _____ SD _____

17. Corporal punishment is rarely used.
SA _____ A _____ U _____ D _____ SD _____

18. If educators don't use corporal punishment, then they will verbally abuse a student.
SA _____ A _____ U _____ D _____ SD _____

19. Corporal punishment is needed as a last resort.
SA _____ A _____ U _____ D _____ SD _____

20. Corporal punishment is used only for serious problems.
SA _____ A _____ U _____ D _____ SD _____